

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY AGRICULTURE ELEMENT

1998 AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES (AGP)

AGP23: Minor Agricultural Cluster Projects.

- a. **Properties throughout the county, including the coastal zone, can apply for a minor agriculture cluster project.**
- b. **The maximum number of parcels allowed in a minor agricultural cluster project shall be equivalent to the number of parcels that would result from a conventional land division in the Agriculture land use category based on the minimum parcel size criteria specified in Figure 2-2, with an increase of at least one more parcel or up to a maximum 25% increase in the number of parcels that could be achieved with a conventional land division.**
- c. **All resulting agricultural parcels must meet the minimum parcel size criteria specified in Figure 2-2 and must be covered by a permanent agricultural open space easement.**
- d. **All resulting residential parcels are entitled to one dwelling per parcel.**

Discussion: This policy is proposed to be applicable throughout the county, including the coastal zone. This policy would allow the use of a cluster design for agricultural land divisions where the applicant wants to propose a project less intense than a major cluster division as described in AGP22 above. Since the Coastal Act and the county's Local Coastal Plan place so much emphasis on the long-term protection of coastal agriculture, making this design tool available in the coastal zone is an important addition to the CZLUO. See Figure 2-4 for an illustration of the minor cluster project concept.

One of the reasons for this policy is to encourage agriculturalists to stay on the land and not sell the family farm. For example, agriculturalists often have a legitimate business need to subdivide land for financing purposes. In addition, they may need a limited number of small homesites for members of the agricultural family so that they can stay on the land for the long-term. At the present time, the only option available to these agriculturalists is to propose a conventional land division that may actually prove more harmful than beneficial to the long-term protection of the agricultural resources.

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The implementation for this policy addresses those needs by providing for creation of a limited number of small parcels. Another benefit of this policy is that by encouraging cluster division, agricultural lands can be permanently protected for continued and enhanced agricultural production.

Many agriculturalists feel that there are not enough incentives or flexibility in the current land use regulations to encourage property owners to subdivide land using a cluster approach instead of a conventional land division. As a result, cluster land divisions are rarely used, even though the cluster division may be the most appropriate to protect agricultural resources.

The implementation of this policy addresses those concerns by providing for smaller parcel sizes and some density bonus, but not requiring that such projects meet the same requirements as a major agricultural cluster project (see AGP 22). The most important differences between the major and minor agricultural cluster project would be: minor cluster projects would be available for use anywhere in the county, including the coastal zone, and not be limited to within five miles of an urban/village reserve line; and minor cluster projects would receive a straight 25 percent density bonus, or at least one more lot than could be achieved with a standard land division.

In exchange for the increase in the number of parcels and the flexibility offered by the minor agricultural cluster approach, the agricultural lot(s) shall meet the minimum parcel size standards specified in Figure 2-2 and be placed in a Williamson Act agricultural preserve contract in accordance with the county Rules of Procedure, and should also be covered by a permanent agricultural open space easement as described for major agricultural cluster projects. CC&R's would be applied to the non-agricultural clustered lots to notify the purchasers that those lots are located in an agricultural area and that the county supports its "Right-to-Farm" ordinance for protection of agricultural operations. The cluster project application would also be given priority processing as a further incentive to the applicant.

Implementation: The Department of Planning and Building should propose amendments to the LUO and the CZLUO to establish standards for minor agricultural land divisions consistent with this policy and as described above.

Timeframe: 18 months from plan adoption.